

GERMAN BARBARITY REVEALED AT LILLE

Women and Girls Lined Up in
Night and Carried Off
Into Captivity.

CITY UTTERLY SACKED

All the Treasures in the Art
Museum Carried Off by the
Teuton Invaders.

By PERRY ROBINSON.
Special Cable Despatch to The Sun from the
London Times Service.

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When was Barren Army in France,
Oct. 18—Late last night I sent a de-
spatch of a few words detailing an
account of my visit to Lille, which was
the most wonderful experience any man
could hope to have in the course of a
life time. Two or three hours before
an officer of a Liverpool regiment and
his men had gone into the city and
made an official call upon the Mayor;
a small party of French and Belgian
correspondents also made their way in,
but I was the only Englishman, except
the press officer accompanying.

The streets for miles were a surging
mass of people, chiefly women and
children who were waiting, very nearly
destitute, anticipating, since the Ger-
mans had gone into the darkness of the
early morning. The rumor spread that
I was an English General. It was
useless to deny, for who could argue
with a hundred thousand people mad
with joy, and on me was poured the
gratitude for its deliverance by a popu-
lation which has suffered so much for
four years.

It was necessary to walk some miles
of street, battling one's way every yard,
through a throng of cheering, laughing,
sobbing women and children, with a
few men scattered among them. I was
showered with flowers and draped with
tri-colors and streamers.

A Frenzied, Cheering Crowd.

Fifty times, with difficulty, I saved
babies thrust at me to be touched or
kissed from being trampled under foot.
Women struggled to kiss some part of
my hand, cheek or clothes. It did not
matter much to them. Men fought to
grip one's hand. It never ceased. Mile
after mile the crowd continued and
grew more frenzied, one great mass of
sobbing, cheering, weeping humanity,
every face glowing with delight, almost
every cheek wet with tears. Cries hailing
me as a savior and deliverer mingled
with shouts of "Vive l'Angleterre!" rose
as in a constant refrain. Those are
things which no man ever could forget.

An extraordinary thing was the multi-
tude of French flags which draped the
streets, hanging in every window. All
these flags had been cherished and hid-
den away for four years. Many were
faded and mouldy from lying in damp
cellars, but most had kept their colors
bright in the darkness where they had
been concealed.

The city practically unhurt. Some
damage was done by the German bom-
bardment at the beginning of the war,
but it was trivial. It is notorious that
we have not shelled the place, and
equally well understood that the Ger-
mans hoped we would. They hoped we
should be compelled to attack Lille di-
rect, but history will give credit to the
strategy that enabled us to force evacua-
tion of the splendid city without a fight.

As regards property, in the first stage
there was universal plundering of shops
and stores. Whatever an officer wanted
he took under the guise of requisition-
ing, giving a bond. Needless to say, those
bonds remain uncollected. Then came
successive proclamations confiscating
goods. First wine, all of which was con-
fiscated, and next metals. Squads of
soldiers visited each house, stripped it
of all metal objects and left. Next they
began to take such things as bicycles
and all rubber goods. Then all houses
were stripped of woollens and mat-
resses. All horses were taken.

The lace and cotton making industries
were brought to a standstill by the con-
fiscation of their stocks and the removal
to Germany of all objects of value.
Everything was taken from the great
museum of the Louvre itself, as the sec-
ond finest art gallery in France. The

whole building was stripped completely
bare.
So the process went on, intensified by
the continued abuse and unceasing suf-
fering. Apparently it was the intention
recently to strip the whole city of every-
thing, as other towns were stripped.
Two weeks ago the inhabitants of
Lomme and other suburbs were ordered
to vacate their homes and go to Lille,
and to take four days' rations, with a
view to being evacuated into Belgium.
They did not go to Belgium, and nothing
more was done. They remained in Lille
and while away their houses were
stripped. I met the first of them mak-
ing their way back to their homes.
Presumably this was the beginning of
a systematic cleaning out, which would
have worked from the suburbs inward
and was stopped only by the rapidity of
our advance and the need of hasty with-
drawal. All channels of transport were
choked by the military, with no possi-
bility of carrying out the usual scientific
robbery.

Women Taken to Germany.

Of all the things which scorched them-
selves into the minds of the people of
Lille the deepest scar was made by the
evacuation of women in 1918. It was
on April 21 that the notice came to Lille,
Roubaix and Tourcoing that 50,000 peo-
ple, men, women and children, were to
be taken to work in Germany. Nobody
was to be outside of his proper residence
after 9 o'clock at night. But at the
first ringing of the doorbell all mem-
bers of the household were to assemble
in the doorway. From then until 10
o'clock Monday night the unspeakable
proceeding beginning in the outer sub-
urbs and ending in the center of the city.
Squads of soldiers presented themselves
at houses after house.

From the parties assembled in the
doorways the picked men, women and
girls, without regard to relationship or
to what members of the family would be
left, but guided only by their judgment
as they surveyed the parties which would
be most desirable. When a number
of the household were not present search
was made and girls of 17 and 18, who
had remained in bed in terror, were liter-
ally torn from their beds and carried off.
For six nights the city lay under the
horror of this thing, as from Monday
until Saturday night, through the hours
of darkness, squads of men went on with
the brutal work. Each section of the
city waited its turn and members of
every family listened for the dread sum-
mons.

After the selections all women were
assembled at the station and there
herded together, girls of gentle birth
with the wives of working men, all of
whom were examined by German army
surgeons to see if they were in good
health. There seemed no detail which
could have made the whole thing more
true and repellent, every civilized
being that was omitted.

The method of midnight visits and the
ruthless tearing apart of families was
made as terrible as possible. It was the
Sixty-fourth Regiment of German In-
fantry which carried out this hideous
work in Lille and to do some of them
justice, my informants told me of see-
ing some of the men in the streets the
next day haggard and almost sick of
the horrors of the preceding night.
Some officers, however, or not, said
their hearts bled for the people. Two
officers are said to have been punished
for refusing to do their part. Compared
to this outstanding outrage all the other
hardships suffered by the people of Lille
sunk into insignificance. On the whole the
mass of the private German soldiers do
not seem to have behaved badly except
for their continued thieving and minor
brutalities.

Rations Were Insufficient.

Worse than the crimes of violence was
the overbearing, arrogant attitude of the
officers. There was much drinking. The
people subsisted on food supplied by the
international commission. The rations
were not enough to keep the people in
health and there was almost constant
hunger, the food being barely sufficient
to live on. This could be told by a
glance at the people, who looked un-
nourished.

All agree that recently the Germans
were worse off for food than the civil-
ians, the soldiers' food being reduced to
a miserable amount of dreadful quality.
All accounts agree to the brutality shown
English prisoners. I heard of one
French girl who had successfully hidden
five British soldiers from the beginning
of the war. I talked also to a French
soldier who had been hidden by his wife
in their cellar since 1914.

Nothing could be more touching than
to hear the people singing snatches of
the "Marseillaise" and other French
songs which for years they had not
dared to sing, cheering and shouting,
and the noise of singing is in the streets
continuously. Four hundred Germans
did not go away, but hid, and afterward
surrendered themselves as prisoners of
war to the civilian population. They
were taken in charge by the gendarmes
until our troops arrived.



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